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THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME, 2000-2003

Report of the Executive Director

CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

II. INTRODUCTION 3

III. SYSTEM CHANGES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED 5

IV. NEEDS AND AIMS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME 7

V. PROPOSED TAP ARRANGEMENTS 11

VI. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS 18

VII. CONCLUSIONS 19

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS 20

ANNEX (containing tables 1, 2, 3 and 4) 21

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is submitted to the Executive Board in response to decisions 95/34 and 98/6 on the UNFPA Technical Support Services (TSS) system. It has been prepared for the third cycle, 2000-2003, of what is now termed the Technical Advisory Programme (TAP)[1]. It describes how the TAP is continuously evolving in response to the changing needs and priorities of countries, the availability of new technologies for supporting and delivering technical assistance, as well as in relation to changing cost structures and resource considerations. The TAP maintains a multi-disciplinary and inter-agency approach with its primary purpose being to improve national capacity to plan and implement population programmes that will help achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Having considered other options for the provision of technical assistance, UNFPA proposes to retain the existing arrangements but with stronger emphasis on national capacity building and technical backstopping of the Country Advisory Teams (CATs).

2. The Fund in collaboration with partner agencies reviewed the functions and key activities of the CST specialists so as to better reflect country needs, with a greater emphasis on systematically addressing priority programme issues through the use of both mission and non-mission time. The functions and key activities of the TSS specialists have also been revised so as to promote a sharper focus on technical backstopping of the CATs. During the 2000-2003 cycle of the TAP, increased development and use of national expertise will be actively pursued as a strategy to strengthen national capacity, reduce the current workload of CAT specialists, and to decrease overall costs. Local hiring results in substantial cost savings to programmes, and resources spent on the training of national consultants are a sound developmental investment. UNFPA will also adopt additional measures for improving the cost-effectiveness of the programme. It will establish a set of indicators for monitoring the performance of the CATs, taking particular account of the goal of increasing national capacity building; it will establish a set of criteria and relevant indicators for assessing the results of the TAS specialists in the provision of backstopping support, and will carry out periodic client satisfaction surveys to assess the effectiveness of the TAP.

3. The Fund is proposing a total of 152 professional posts (134 CAT specialists' posts plus 18 TAS specialists' posts) in the TAP for 2000-2003, as compared with 154 posts at present. Based on an analysis of the expected demand for the services of the CAT specialists, the Fund needs to increase the number of CAT specialist posts to 134, as compared with 130 at present. However, if sufficient resources are not available, the Fund is proposing as a second option to have 113 CAT posts. Under both options in the new TAP arrangements the Fund is also proposing to have 18 TAS specialists' posts as well as backstopping from NGOs.

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[1] An explanation of the proposed new nomenclature is given in paragraph 7.

4. The elements for a possible Executive Board decision are contained in paragraph 57 of this report.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

5. In September 1995, through decision 95/34, the Executive Board authorized UNFPA to commit $107 million to implement its Technical Support Services (TSS) arrangements over the four-year period 1996-1999. The Executive Board, inter alia, welcomed the plan of the Executive Director to strengthen the TSS arrangements, and in particular the country support teams, and requested UNFPA to report annually to the Board on the implementation and monitoring of the TSS arrangements. In April 1998, through decision 98/6, the Executive Board, inter alia, invited the Executive Director, in the light of recommendations arising from the ICPD+5 process and in consultation with partner agencies, "to develop future options for: (a) providing specialist support and advice to country support teams and country programmes through arrangements that utilize the best expertise available within the United Nations system and from other sources and (b) enhancing the involvement and contribution of relevant United Nations specialized agencies in taking forward and promoting the ICPD agenda" and requested that the Executive Director "present these proposals in a report, including an analysis of the financial and budgetary aspects, to the Executive Board at its third regular session in 1999".

6. This present report is submitted to the Executive Board in response to decisions 95/34 and 98/6 on the UNFPA TSS system. Section III of the report briefly reviews system changes, achievements and lessons learned during 1996-1999; section IV outlines the needs and aims of the technical advisory programme; section V provides proposals for meeting these needs over the period 2000-2003; section VI presents an analysis of the financial and budgetary implications; section VII contains conclusions; and section VIII provides possible elements for a decision by the Executive Board.

7. Over time, the term Technical Support Services system has become rather confusing because it has been applied to both the entire TSS system and the TSS specialists. For this reason, UNFPA is proposing that henceforth the system should be known as the Technical Advisory Programme (TAP), comprising the Fund's Country Advisory Teams (CATs) and the Technical Advisory Services (TAS). These new terms are used throughout this report, except when reference is made to the past. Two earlier documents, DP/FPA/1997/16 and DP/FPA/1999/4, contain, inter alia, background information on improvements implemented in the operations of the TSS specialists.

B. Background

8. The primary purpose of all United Nations development assistance efforts is to build national capacity to achieve the development goals agreed to by Member States at the various international conferences, conventions and summits held during the 1990s and earlier. The ICPD Programme of Action recommended a set of population and development objectives, as well as mutually supportive qualitative and quantitative goals, to be attained over a 20-year time period. The Fund's mandate is to support the efforts of countries to meet these objectives and goals, both through the provision of material and financial support and through technical assistance to build and strengthen national capacity. The TSS system is an important means for helping to build national capacity so that countries can achieve the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action.

9. The TSS system is an inter-agency arrangement through which technical assistance is provided to countries in, inter alia, the thematic areas of reproductive health, population and development strategies, and advocacy, with gender as an important cross-cutting dimension in each of these areas. The TSS system makes available appropriate multidisciplinary technical resources to build national capacities. A distinctive feature of the TSS system is that it brings together a wide array of expertise to promote national capacity building with respect to issues related to population and reproductive health. The TSS system currently consists of a network of eight regional/sub-regional Country Support Teams (CSTs) made up of technical specialists with differing skills and coming from different United Nations organizations and NGOs, together with backstopping specialists services provided mainly from the headquarters of United Nations organizations but also from international NGOs.

10. The CSTs and the TSS specialists work with national experts to provide technical support for country programmes. When national expertise is not available to meet the technical advisory needs of country programmes, the CSTs provide it at the request of the country, often working in multidisciplinary teams. The TSS specialists provide technical backstopping to the CSTs -- thereby transferring agency technical expertise and interregional lessons -- and when requested, they also provide technical assistance to countries. In addition, TSS specialists develop and promote the use of new tools that help to make country programmes more effective. The multisectoral and multi-disciplinary approach of the TSS system contributes towards effectively promoting population and development concerns in countries.

III. SYSTEM CHANGES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED, 1996-1999

A. Changes

11. The TSS system has continued to evolve and improve during the 1996-1999 cycle with, inter alia, changes in the composition of the CSTs to reflect new country priorities and greater emphasis on the multidisciplinary team approach in the provision of technical assistance to countries. Experience has shown that this is an effective approach that has been well received by countries. It leads to more comprehensive programme formulation, including a clearer focus on the operationalization of the ICPD Programme of Action. It also enables advisers to deal with a variety of problems and issues during a single mission and helps improve the overall effectiveness of technical backstopping of country programmes. The CSTs are now much more involved in strategic programming missions, and much less in providing technical assistance to particular projects.

12. During the 1996-1999 cycle of the TSS system, there was a marked improvement in the interaction and substantive cooperation between country offices, CST advisers, TSS specialists and UNFPA headquarters. One example of how this has been accomplished is the annual focus on the joint identification of key and priority work themes. Since 1998, a participatory process involving UNFPA headquarters, the country offices, CSTs and partner agencies has been utilized to select priority themes that are included in TSS specialists' work plans, which are then discussed in joint thematic workshops, internal CST workshops and seminars, thereby strengthening support for these themes at the country level. Another result of the increased collaboration is joint production of technical papers, as well as the application at country level of new approaches, strategies and tools developed with the help of TSS specialists (see DP/FPA/1999/4). The establishment of a multidisciplinary team of experts within the Coordination Branch of the Technical and Policy Division (TPD) of UNFPA has been another change that has contributed to increased effectiveness of the TSS system.

B. Achievements

13. The TSS system has actively contributed to national capacity building and promoting the ICPD Programme of Action in national population and reproductive health programmes. UNFPA country offices and CSTs have increasingly encouraged the use of national experts for the provision of technical assistance in programmes, and in some countries a core group of national experts has been identified and utilized. The CSTs have supported national capacity building in a variety of ways, including on-the-job counterpart training of nationals, participation in country and regional training courses and workshops and the provision of relevant materials. Through the technical support and inputs provided to various country programming processes, including in relation to a sector wide approach (SWAp) on reproductive health in Ethiopia, CST advisers have played a key

role in contributing to creating an enabling environment for achieving the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. For example, CST advisers have assisted countries in adopting an integrated approach to reproductive health, focusing on such issues as quality of care and gender mainstreaming, and in developing monitoring and evaluation systems. The CSTs have also helped to promote policy dialogue at the highest levels within programme countries. The increasing demand from countries for the technical services of the CST advisers often outstrips their availability.

14. The TSS specialists have provided increased technical backstopping to the CSTs, including through the provision of pertinent documents and publications from the specialized agencies relating to new standards, methodologies and research findings. At the request of CST Directors, TSS specialists have played an increasing role in national capacity building through the provision of training materials and participation in the CST internal workshops. The TSS specialists have also helped to promote the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action within their agencies, including by assisting them to ensure that population issues are recognized by the various sectors within the agencies and are also adequately taken into account in the follow-up to other major United Nations conferences. The TSS specialists have also served another function in the co-sponsoring institutions: their position has enabled them to provide technical backstopping and information services on population issues to the field and other branches of their respective agencies, thus assisting with the integration of population aspects in relevant programmes.

C. Lessons learned

15. The experience gained during the period 1996-1999 indicates that the TSS system has made many positive contributions in programme countries; however, it is evident that a more systematic strategy is needed for national capacity development. Lessons learned, based on the experience to date, include the following:

(a) The multidisciplinary Country Support Team offers a unique model on which national teams could be patterned, as for example the team in Pakistan, which is making a valuable contribution in assisting in the implementation of the national population programme;

(b) Attaching national experts to CSTs for training has proved valuable, particularly as it has provided a multidisciplinary perspective and exposure and enabled the national staff to benefit from visiting and interacting with staff in governmental and non-governmental departments in the host CST country, as for example in Zimbabwe and Thailand. This has also had the added value of enabling and promoting South-South cooperation;

(c) The CSTs have been effective in training national counterparts on the logical framework (logframe) methodology, which in turn is benefiting programme implementation.

However, there is a clear need to undertake further work on the selection and use of indicators;

(d) The CSTs have an important role to play in sector-wide approaches in the area of health and population as has been demonstrated by the effective participation of the CST in the SWAp in Ethiopia;

(e) It is evident that if too much of the time of the CSTs is absorbed in missions then other important facets of their work are impacted and this has consequences on national capacity building. As a result, the system will limit the time devoted to CST missions.

IV. NEEDS AND AIMS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME

A. Needs and aims

16. As noted in paragraph 7, UNFPA is proposing that henceforth the TSS system be known as the TAP. The main goal of the TAP is improved national capacity to plan and implement programmes in the fields of population and development and reproductive health. The TAP arrangements are designed with this goal in mind, and resources are distributed in such a way as to best help realize this goal. The TAP aims to improve countries' access to multidisciplinary technical knowledge, information, analysis and research for use in population programmes, as well as to help to accelerate the achievement of national self-reliance through the use and development of national expertise. The TAP serves as the technical arm of UNFPA country offices.

17. Since the beginning of the 1996-1999 cycle, requests from countries for technical advisory services from the CATs have steadily increased, far beyond what can be accommodated. The average number of mission days per specialist, while overall staying below the set limit of 50 per cent of the total work time, has increased by an average of 5 per cent between 1996 and 1998. In spite of this, non-mission activities being performed by the CATs, such as desk support to country programmes and projects, and reviews of technical documents, have also expanded. The number of multidisciplinary missions is also increasing and joint missions currently account for up to one third of total missions.

18. In countries where trained personnel are few and institutional capacity is limited, a situation typically found Category A countries, there is a major need and demand for technical assistance to ensure the effective implementation of programmes. These countries have the highest priority in terms of obtaining TAP time and resources. They also have the greatest need for a comprehensive package of technical support and training, which may involve national/regional consultants, the CAT specialists and TAS specialists. In such countries, a combination of short-term and longer-term technical assistance is often required.

19. Although in many countries, typically those classified as belonging to Category B, national capacity within governmental organizations and local NGOs is sufficient in most areas, there continues to be a need for technical support in specialized areas. If this merely requires short-term assistance, it can generally be most efficiently provided through technical support from the CAT specialists, TAS specialists or consultants from within the region. In several other countries, typically those classified as belonging to Category C, there are often sufficient local human and institutional resources for effective national execution and management of population programmes; therefore their requests for technical assistance tend to be in specialized areas and aimed at addressing specific gaps.

20. CAT specialists devote the greatest part of their mission time, and non-mission time, to countries with the most limited national technical resources, both for reasons of equity and cost-effectiveness, as well as for building national capacity. As a general rule, missions always involve counterpart training components as well as technical assistance. CAT support to countries in least need is minimized through the greater utilization of national and regional resources. This is usually the most cost-effective means of technical support and also reinforces the national ownership of programmes and projects.

21. Increased emphasis on utilizing and building national capacity has implications for the TAP at all levels. First, at the UNFPA country office level, there is a commitment to identifying and utilizing local skills in support of the national development efforts in general and country population programmes in particular. This includes the development and maintenance of an up-to-date and comprehensive roster of consultants, which should go hand in hand with a commitment to training and skills development of nationals.

22. The CAT serves as a clearinghouse for technical support, and finds alternatives when its own specialists can not provide the support. The CAT also assists in building national capacity by organizing training in technical and substantive skills, UNFPA technical guidelines and programming tools. It is important that programme managers and consultants receive training in logframe analysis, monitoring and evaluation. Many Governments and NGOs request UNFPA support for in-service training of staff in such areas as project development, management and evaluation. The CAT specialists play an increasing role in developing such courses.

B. Functions of the CAT specialists

23. The terms of reference of the CAT specialists have evolved over time so as to respond to the diverse and changing needs of countries, particularly in response to the post-ICPD perspective on population and development. The Fund has reviewed and revised the functions and key activities of the CAT specialists (see Annex, table 1) to better reflect the priority and emerging needs of

countries, while keeping in line with the UNFPA mandate and programme priorities. The revised functions reflect a greater emphasis on systematically addressing national capacity building through the use of both mission and non-mission time. CATs will take effective proactive measures in addressing capacity building needs through, inter alia, attachment training programmes that support national counterparts and regional training that addresses specific country and regional needs. The CATs will place more emphasis on syntheses of successful experiences and best practices, drawing on their mission reports and country experiences, so as to improve the design and content of programmes and projects. There will be increased collaboration with the UNFPA Global Initiative on Reproductive Health Commodity Management in national capacity building and logistics management. There will also be increased interaction between the CATs and the regional/subregional offices of various United Nations organizations, for example, UNICEF, ILO UNIFEM and UNAIDS, the Bretton Woods institutions and NGOs.

24. The Fund is proposing a clearer delineation of non-mission tasks of the CATs and stricter adherence to time periods when CAT specialists do not travel on missions -- at least 50 per cent of each CAT specialist's time should be spent at the CAT base. This would allow more time for the preparation of and follow-up to missions (tasks that are greatly facilitated through utilization of the available information technology), and desk reviews for the preparation and synthesis of examples of best practices and lessons learned. It would also help alleviate mission fatigue. Common periods at the base when all team members are present also help in team building and multidisciplinary strategizing, for example in relation to joint missions and internal seminars.

25. The Fund is reviewing how best to utilize the CATs in relation to the new programming instruments that have been developed as part of the United Nations reform process. One modality already used is for CAT specialists to assist country offices in providing inputs to the United Nations Country Teams during the preparation of Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). This provides opportunities to ensure that the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action are reflected in the CCAs and the UNDAFs. CAT specialists will also be increasingly required to assist in the development of SWAps, especially in the area of health, to ensure that sufficient prominence is given to reproductive health and reproductive rights as well as gender issues. A recent example that attests to this is the contribution of the CST, based in Addis Ababa, to the SWAp developed in Ethiopia. TAS specialists can also play a role in the development of these new programming instruments given their interregional and cross-sectoral knowledge. In addition, the CATs will continue to promote South-South cooperation, especially through the regional and interregional sharing of skills and knowledge and through training programmes for developing countries, in collaboration with, for example, the Partners in Population and Development and the Centres of Excellence initiatives.

26. The Fund is also proposing to establish a network of evaluation focal points among the CATs, so as to optimize the dissemination and use of programme and project evaluation findings and to increase interaction between the Office of Oversight and Evaluation at UNFPA headquarters and the CATs on matters concerning monitoring and evaluation, such as providing inputs in the identification of thematic evaluations and innovative approaches and design of evaluation methodologies.

C. Functions of TAS specialists and other specialized services

27. The Fund has reviewed and revised the functions and key activities of the TAS specialists, in consultation with partner agencies, so as to promote a sharper focus on technical backstopping of the CATs in relation to their current priority needs (see Annex, table 2). TAS specialists are well placed to undertake interregional syntheses of experiences, lessons learned and best practices for improving subprogrammes and projects. Appropriate mechanisms will be put in place so that the relevant information on UNFPA programme and project implementation is made available to the TAS specialists in a timely manner. It is envisaged that TAS specialists will play an important role in ensuring that technical resources and information are made available from their respective agencies to facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of activities under the Fund's intercountry programme. These should cover normative aspects of population and development, as well as guidelines and tools for research and training methodologies.

28. While the TAS specialists can meet most of the demands for technical backstopping of the CATs, there are occasions when other specialized skills are needed as, for example, in the case of new and emerging issues that are not normally covered within the TAP. For such situations, international NGOs provide another mechanism for backstopping and updating CATs.

D. Programme activities and outputs

29. Outlined below are the types of activities the TAP would support, for example, in such key areas as programmes/policies; training; data; and research; and the expected outputs:

(a) Programmes/policies -- Programme and project development, including Country Population Assessments; programme and project monitoring; mid-term and end-of-programme/project evaluations; population and reproductive health advocacy and information, education and communication (IEC); population policies and components of CCAs/UNDAFs and SWAps. These activities will lead to well-designed and managed population programmes based on population policies that reflect ICPD objectives and goals.

(b) Training -- Develop and prepare training plans and strategies which would include

training materials and guidelines; train trainers; facilitate training workshops and training of nationals in the utilization of the logframe approach; formulate training curricula and modules for in-service training; provide resource persons and rapporteurs for country, regional and subregional workshops and seminars; and participate in inter-agency and inter-country meetings. These activities will lead to increased numbers of local experts able to design and manage population programmes.

(c) Data -- Assistance for censuses and surveys in population, health and other related socio-economic areas; and for the design and implementation of management information systems. These activities will ensure the availability of an adequate quantitative information base for formulating, monitoring and evaluating population programmes.

(d) Research -- Prepare syntheses of best practices; design research projects; prepare and review of methodological and substantive reports and publications; and prepare technical background papers and documentation for technical meetings. These activities will ensure up-to-date methodological, quantitative and qualitative information for population programmes.

V. PROPOSED TAP ARRANGEMENTS

A. Consideration of options

30. The proposed new TAP arrangements for 2000-2003 take into consideration a series of in-depth reviews conducted during the past two years of the TSS system. They reflect the likely continuation of the heavy demands on the CATs for strategic missions in support of almost 100 new country programmes anticipated over this period, as well as several subregional programmes; the changing needs for technical assistance at the country level that have emerged, inter alia, through the ICPD+5 review process; the need for the Fund to participate actively in CCAs, UNDAFs and SWAps; and the skill composition required to meet these needs. The proposed arrangements also take into account the need for flexibility in the provision of backstopping support to the CATs. As part of the process of developing the options, and consideration was given to alternative modalities for providing technical assistance.

31. In considering various options to deliver national assistance, one alternative that was considered was to focus on providing advice and assistance to countries, on an individual basis, for short- or long-term periods, as per the needs of individual countries. In this scenario it was envisaged that there would no longer be a TSS system. Instead, consultants would be used to provide advice and assistance on an ad hoc basis in response to the specific needs of individual countries. However, in analysing this modality it soon became evident that there would be several disadvantages: lack of a multidisciplinary team approach that is currently available through the CSTs; lack of continuity in the type of advice and assistance offered; variability in the quality of ad

hoc consultancy services; and high costs. Providing advice and assistance on an ad hoc basis would pose a high-cost burden on countries, particularly on those that have programmes with limited funds. Given the high costs and the absence of economies of scale, coupled with the lack of continuity and multidisciplinarity of advice and assistance, this modality was not considered viable.

32. Another option that was considered involved retaining the Country Support Teams but doing away with the second tier of the TSS system, i.e., the TSS specialists. However, this option was not considered viable. If the TSS specialist tier were eliminated, the system would lose a very valuable aspect of the advice and assistance being provided to programme countries, namely, the technical backstopping and state-of-the-art information, methodologies and other key materials emerging from the field of the population and development that are provided by the TSS specialists to the CSTs to benefit programme countries. The TSS specialists also perform another key function, namely, synthesizing and disseminating to the CSTs lessons learned and best practices culled from the regional and international levels. Removing this tier of expertise would weaken the system and deprive the CSTs of the high-level technical backstopping provided by the TSS specialists. Concomitantly, the system would lose the unique inter-agency collaboration that exists within the TSS system and which benefits programme countries. Indeed, one of the unique aspects of the TSS system is that its structure and composition allow it to draw on several organizations and agencies and many different areas of expertise to deliver value-added technical advice and assistance to programme countries in the service of national capacity building. Recognizing the important and valuable contribution of the TSS specialists, it was considered essential to retain them.

33. Thus, after due consideration, the Fund proposes to retain the existing arrangements of the system but with stronger emphasis on national capacity building and technical backstopping of the CATs. UNFPA fully endorses the continuation of a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach for the provision of technical assistance to countries through a network of CATs, coupled with appropriate backstopping support and services provided by TAS specialists from the specialized agencies and by international NGOs. The proposed TAP would draw on the best available technical backstopping from its partners and would seek to capitalize on their areas of comparative advantage in order to assist programme countries in the critical task of national capacity building.

B. Global distribution of the CATs

34. The geographical distribution of the CATs is an important factor in their ability to respond efficiently to country requests for technical assistance (see Annex, table 3). They need to be centrally located in relation to the countries that they assist, and in locations that are convenient for international travel. In order to better meet the growing demands for technical assistance from the countries with economies in transition in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA proposes to relocate a small group of the specialists to serve these countries. The technical assistance needs of

these countries tend to differ from those of the countries covered by the CATs based in Amman, Jordan, and Kathmandu, Nepal. Under the proposed new arrangements the Amman and Kathmandu CATs would cover fewer countries. The professional staffing will be met entirely from available resources by relocations from within the system. As an additional efficiency measure, the Fund will ensure that where feasible CAT Directors have a dual role as team director and substantive adviser.

C. Size and composition of the CATs

35. The size and composition of the CATs are both clearly related to the number and type of countries covered by the teams, substantive national needs, as well as UNFPA programming priorities. The CATs should have a sufficient number of technical specialists to be able to meet the priority needs of the countries they serve and to ensure a multidisciplinary perspective. At the same time, the teams should not be so large that they lose their coherence or become difficult to manage.

36. The three CATs in Africa cater to the highest number and proportion of Category A countries. Currently, 44 per cent of expenditure on the CATs is on the three teams in Africa, which serve about two thirds of the Fund's priority Category A countries. On the basis of this, but mindful of differences in regional population size and absorptive capacity, some further small proportionate shift of resources towards Africa appears justifiable. Conversely, the CATs in Amman and Mexico City cover relatively small proportions of Category A countries, and the country programmes of the countries served by these CATs tend to be relatively small, with only rather limited possibilities for building-in specialist support for individual project components. Hence, the provision of technical assistance, primarily through CAT specialists, is a very important part of the support provided by the Fund in these regions and should continue.

37. In general terms, the distribution of CAT specialists should reflect the differing pattern of the priorities of country programmes in a given region so that the demands for technical assistance from countries can be readily met. These patterns tend to change over time and hence the composition of the CATs must remain flexible and be adjusted periodically. Since UNFPA country programmes are increasingly including components for the treatment and prevention of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, it is important that the TAP be strengthened in terms of the skills and expertise required to provide technical support in these areas. In this respect it is envisaged that there will be increased collaboration with UNAIDS. Similarly, CATs in emergency-prone regions should be able to provide technical support in rapid demographic and health assessment techniques, as well as in the assessment of population and reproductive health needs and the design, monitoring and backstopping of emergency reproductive health activities.

38. Team composition would generally include specialists in the following areas: reproductive health, including adolescent reproductive health; gender and socio-cultural research; population and development strategies, both policy and data issues; and advocacy and IEC. As noted above, there is also an increasing need for specialists on HIV/AIDS; and on such cross-cutting issues as management, especially as it relates to institutional capacity building, monitoring and evaluation. Some of these cross-cutting areas would need to be covered by all specialists and would be specified in the job descriptions. Training would be provided where necessary to ensure that all specialists have the appropriate knowledge in these areas.

39. The UNFPA Geographical Divisions and the CAT Directors, in close consultation with the Fund's country offices, analysed the expected demand for the services of the CAT specialists by taking into account the prospective needs of countries for technical assistance; the workload of the specialists; and emerging demand in relation to national priorities and priorities that emerged from the ICPD+5 review process. Based on this analysis, and if resource levels increase in line with the Fund's resource mobilization strategy, UNFPA would need to increase the number of CAT specialist posts (including directors) to 134 -- as indicated in option 1 of table 3 in the Annex. Under this option, the existing level of posts would be maintained in all CATs (after taking account of post transfers from the CATs in Kathmandu and Amman to the proposed group covering the countries with economies in transition), there would be an increase of one post in each of the CATs in Africa, and 6 posts would be allocated to the proposed group covering the countries with economies in transition. However, if sufficient resources are not available, the Fund proposes having as the very minimum 113 CAT posts, as outlined in option 2 of table 3 in the Annex.

D. Number and distribution of TAS specialists

40. Under the new TAP arrangements, the Fund is proposing 18 posts for TAS specialists (see Annex, table 4). The proposed distribution is broadly consistent with the thematic priorities of country programmes and the priorities emerging from the ICPD+5 review process. Based on the consideration of maintaining a minimum critical mass for effective backstopping and advocacy within agencies, it is proposed that the 18 posts be distributed as follows: four posts at WHO; three posts each at FAO, ILO and UNESCO; one post at UNIFEM; and one post each at three of the Regional Commissions. UNFPA will continue to strengthen its relationship with UNAIDS (at present UNAIDS provides one specialist to the Bangkok CAT and may provide more in the future) and the Fund will include one TAS post at UNAIDS.

E. Technical backstopping of CATs through international NGOs

41. An important aim of the TAP is to provide the most effective country programme support

possible. As already noted above, while national experts, CAT specialists and TAS specialists can provide such support in most cases, there are times when other special skills are needed. Such expertise may be available from international NGOs. The Fund therefore proposes to establish ad hoc arrangements with such institutions that have a comparative advantage, including the use of service contracts for backstopping the CATs in specialized areas.

F. Role of the Inter-Agency Task Force

42. The Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) of the TAP, chaired by the Fund's Deputy Executive Director (Programme), includes representatives from UNFPA and the other United Nations agencies participating in the TAP. The IATF normally meets once a year, but in recent years several additional meetings have also been convened. The primary purposes of the IATF are to monitor the performance of the TAP programme with a view to improving the quality and timeliness of technical support to country programmes, and to ensure harmonization and complementarity of the tasks performed by the TAP professional staff. Its functions include the review and assessment of: TAP arrangements, including the technical backstopping provided by the CATs and specialists for national capacity building; the location and composition of the CATs; job descriptions and assessments of the CAT specialists and TAS specialists; collaboration between UNFPA Country Directors, CATs, TAS and other participating institutions with a view to foster more efficient coordination of technical support and backstopping. The IATF also identifies priority themes for joint interagency multidisciplinary work, including thematic workshops. It reports and makes recommendations to the Executive Director of UNFPA.

G. Role of the UNFPA Technical and Policy Division and the Geographical Divisions

43. The Technical and Policy Division of UNFPA, through its Coordination Branch, is responsible for the coordination of all aspects of the TAP. Functions of the Coordination Branch include: reviewing and evaluating the technical expertise of potential CAT/TAS specialists; coordinating the functioning of the consultants' rosters at various levels; gathering, synthesizing and disseminating technical information, lessons learned and best practices; and monitoring and supporting the work of the TAS specialists, including reviewing their annual work-plans. Based on its experience over the past 18 months, the Coordination Branch plans to adopt a more active role in coordinating and backstopping the TAP, including by organizing thematic workshops with members of the TAP; ensuring an efficient system for monitoring resource needs and allocations to the TAP; monitoring the overall result of the TAP; and involving, where necessary, the Technical and Policy Branches of TPD.

44. The Fund's four Geographical Divisions have an important role in the management, backstopping and monitoring of the CATs, as reflected in inputs to the CAT work plans, reviews

of CAT specialists' mission reports and in the recruitment of new specialists. In addition to the day-to-day supervision of the CATs, the Geographical Divisions also help to link the policy and technical aspects of the work of the CATs as they relate to the region. They also work closely with the CATs to establish priorities for the Fund's regional programmes. On technical and substantive issues, the Geographical Divisions work in consultation with TPD, which has an overall role in coordinating the CATs.

45. The Geographical Divisions and the Coordination Branch will play a greater role in strengthening linkages between country offices, CATs and the TAS to bring about improved communications and interaction, particularly with respect to policy guidance and monitoring issues.

H. Use of rosters of consultants

46. An important factor in effectively identifying and utilizing locally available skills is the establishment of an up-to-date roster of consultants in each country. The roster should include institutions and individuals, from both the public and private sectors, with expertise in the areas of reproductive health, population and development strategies, gender and advocacy. The roster should be managed and maintained by the country office and should be readily available to the CATs and to staff at UNFPA headquarters. In particular, the roster should include information on nationals who have previous international consulting experience, or who have participated in regional or international training programmes, as well as those who are experienced in specific technical areas and may have been trained and/or identified by CAT specialists. Country offices are urged to utilize the roster as a first resort whenever technical support is needed. When the required skills are not available, the country office should inform the CAT and request assistance. The CAT, acting as a clearing-house, would determine whether a mission by a specialist was feasible or whether a consultant, preferably from a nearby country, might be needed. The maintenance at UNFPA headquarters of a centralized roster of consultants, linked to those of the CATs and country offices, will facilitate the quick identification of appropriate consultants.

I. Improved use of information technology

47. In order to continue to provide the best possible technical support for programmes, it is important that all country offices and CAT specialists have access to the latest technical information in the areas of concern, as well as to reports and publications that can contribute to improved programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. TAS specialists and international NGOs have a particular responsibility for providing such information. To increase access to and encourage the use of information technology, the TAP is engaged in:

(a) Ensuring that all staff have access to the Internet to facilitate the electronic transfer of

information, including access to reference sources and libraries, and agency and NGO websites. Electronic links between country offices, CATs, agencies and UNFPA headquarters will be established through "chat lines" to encourage and facilitate the regular sharing of ideas and experience. Provision will be made for the regular upgrading of hardware and software within CATs and related short-term training for the specialists;

(b) Compiling a database that draws on information from country programmes on best practices, lessons learned, and survey findings. The database will include similar information produced by the CATs and TAS specialists that may not have reached a broad audience. All duty travel reports of CAT specialists and TAS specialists, indexed by country, thematic area and date are also expected to be included in the database;

(c) Promoting the use of interactive learning modules, being developed through the project on Distance Learning System on Population Issues, a joint undertaking between UNFPA and the United Nations Staff College in Turin, Italy. The modules would be useful for all levels of the TAP and for institutions in developing countries working in the area of population and reproductive health.

J. Improving cost-effectiveness

48. The increased development and use of national expertise will be actively pursued as a strategy to strengthen national capacity, reduce the current workload of CAT specialists, and reduce the overall cost of the TAS arrangement. Local hiring results in substantial cost savings to programmes, and resources spent on training of national consultants are a sound investment both financially and in terms of building national capacity. The establishment of subregional networks of experts and institutions will be further encouraged. In addition to providing advice and technical support to country programmes, CATs will further promote networking and exchange of experiences within the subregion and become subregional hubs for documenting and disseminating best practices.

49. In order to further reduce administrative overheads and costs, the Fund intends to review the ratio of administrative support staff to professionals across all the CATs. The aim will be to keep staffing to a minimum with due account being taken of different regional situations. For various reasons, a considerable proportion of Professional posts are normally vacant. Support staff are normally local residents and vacancies are quickly filled. Hence the actual ratio of support staff to professional staff is close to 1:1. During the new cycle, efforts will be made to reduce this ratio. Further investments in, and use of, information technology will also reduce the need for support staff such as switchboard operators and typists.

K. Monitoring and evaluation

50. While the cost of the various elements of the TAP can be monitored and managed through the Fund's Programme Resource Management System (PRMS), measuring and monitoring the results of the TAP is more complex. Using the logframe approach, UNFPA will adopt a combination of approaches for improving the cost-effectiveness of the system and ensuring that the highest priority is given to national capacity building. First, the Fund will establish a set of indicators for measuring the performance of the nine CATs, taking into particular account the goal of increasing national capacity building. Second, the Fund will establish a set of criteria and relevant indicators for assessing the performance of the TAS specialists in the provision of backstopping support. Third, the Fund will carry out periodic client satisfaction surveys to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of system outputs.

51. UNFPA will review annually the size and composition of the CATs and the backstopping arrangements using the Inter-Agency Task Force mechanism and in consultation with UNFPA country offices. The Fund will also organize a comprehensive independent evaluation of the new TAP arrangements towards the end of the 2000-2003 cycle.

VI. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

A. TSS system budget 1996-1999

52. In decision 95/34, the Executive Board authorized UNFPA to commit an amount of $107 million over the four-year period 1996-1999 to implement the TSS system arrangements. Estimates indicate that by the end of 1999, about $92 million, that is 86 per cent of the resources approved, would have been utilized. It is estimated that in 1998 about 81 per cent of resources went to supporting the CATs and 19 per cent to funding the TSS specialists. These figure do not include the direct and indirect costs borne by the specialized agencies. No overhead costs were charged to the Fund. The lower-than-approved total expenditure is largely related to resource constraints, especially the reduction in the Fund's income during the second biennium of the TSS cycle. As a result, UNFPA has been prudent in the management of recruitment when vacancies have arisen, and there has been a decline in the number of TSS specialists posts from 43 in 1995 to 24 in January 1999, in line with decision 97/27 of the Executive Board.

B. Proposed TAP budget 2000-2003

53. The Fund is proposing a total of 152 professional posts (134 CAT specialists' post plus 18 TAS specialists' posts) in the TAP for 2000-2003, as compared with 154 posts at present. The cost of the proposed maximum size of the TAP (with option 1 for the CATs -- see table 3 in the Annex),

which would be commensurate with needs, and taking into account the rise over time in actual costs, is $113 million for the period 2000-2003 -- an amount currently beyond the resources available from the regular budget. An amount of $95 million is proposed for the minimum size of the TAP (with option 2 for the CATs -- see table 3 in the Annex) for the period 2000-2003, representing a reduction of 11 per cent as compared with the amount approved to implement the TSS arrangements over the period 1996-1999. UNFPA has estimated that $95 million would support a total Professional staff of 131 (113 CAT specialists and 18 TAS specialists), the local costs of the CATs, as well as a small amount for service contracts for backstopping from NGOs. In assessing the cost of the TAP it should be recalled that the TAP significantly reduces the costs of technical assistance charged directly to country programmes.

54. The Professional posts have been assigned between the CATs and the specialized agencies based on the priority needs of countries, considerations relating to cost-effectiveness and the views of partners. While the reduction of 23 posts (with option 2 for the CATs) is substantial, and will affect the ability of the system to respond to country needs, it should be noted that during 1998 an average vacancy rate of 18 per cent, that is 27 posts, was maintained. Hence, with a total number of posts of 131, combined with efficient management of vacancies (maintaining a vacancy rate in excess of 10 per cent is included in the calculations) is feasible. However, if additional resources can be made available through multi-bilateral or other arrangements, including regular resources should income levels increase, this would considerably strengthen the TAP's ability to adequately respond to country needs.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

55. The UNFPA TAP needs to continuously evolve in response to the changing needs and priorities of countries, the availability of new technologies for supporting and delivering technical assistance, and in relation to changing cost structures and resource considerations. The TAP must also continue to concentrate its scarce resources and efforts on building and strengthening national capacity in the countries and regions most in need. It must also continue to promote the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action, with a particular focus on the emerging issues and priority concerns identified by countries in the course of the ICPD+5 review and appraisal process.

56. UNFPA, in consultation with its partner agencies, has made an extensive review of the current and prospective needs of countries for the provision of technical assistance. Based on this review, and after consideration of other options, the Fund fully endorses the continuation of a multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approach to the provision of technical assistance to programme countries. The TAP system has proven to be a unique and effective modality for responding to the high demand for technical assistance from developing countries and those with economies in transition. The Fund's proposals for the third cycle of the TAP, 2000-0003, take into account, inter

alia, the international funding situation; the need to reconfigure the system to reflect new needs and shifting priorities, including working with new partners; and the need to regularly monitor performance to ensure efficiency, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

57. The Executive Board may wish to:

(a) Take note of the report as contained in document DP/FPA/1999/12;

(b) Endorse the proposals contained in paragraphs 30-51 of this report;

(c) Authorize the Executive Director to commit an amount of $113 over the four-year period 2000-2003 to implement the TAP arrangements, with $95 million being made available from regular resources and $18 million from multi-bilateral and/or other resources, including regular resources should income levels increase;

(d) Request the Executive Director to submit a report to the Executive Board in 2002 on the progress made during the two years 2000-2001 in implementing the TAP arrangements.

ANNEX

Table 1: Functions and key activities of the CAT Specialists

Functions	CAT Specialists activities
Training	• Provide on-the-job training of national counterparts in all missions and, where feasible, through electronic media • Support training activities, both at country and regional levels, by providing technical guidance in their design and methodology, serving as resource persons, or providing relevant materials and information • Support for training of nationals in the areas of project formulation (including preparation of project documents and using logframes), programme management, monitoring and evaluation • Identify and network with national experts to enhance and update their substantive knowledge
Policy and programme development and implementation	• Provide technical support to country/regional programmes by applying strategic planning approaches that identify and address ICPD issues, and provide countries with relevant, timely and substantive advice • Ensure effective planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, including participation in Country Programme Assessments • Support for CCA/UNDAF and SWAps • Identify issues that need to be addressed at the regional level through the inter-country programme
Advocacy	• Advocate ICPD strategies with counterpart ministries and agency field offices to create an appropriate programming enabling environment through a situation and stakeholders analysis • Assist Field Offices in creating a supporting environment to enhance partnerships, mobilize resources, countering oppositions and enhance partnerships with, inter alia, media, NGOs, other United Nations agencies, in the development of appropriate advocacy/IEC strategies
Research and dissemination	• Synthesize and analyse country/regional programme experiences, lessons learned, best practices and document and disseminate them • Provide advice to national institutions in conducting operational /socio-cultural research to ensure that adequate baseline data are generated and used as basis for systematic design/evaluation of programmes/ projects
Coordination and collaboration	• Collaborate with governments in identifying and developing links with national/international NGOs and other potential partners for technical backstopping to countries

Table 2: Functions and key activities of the TAS Specialists

Functions	TAS Specialists activities
Backstopping CATs through collaboration on basis of agency expertise	• Put agency expertise at the service of the TAP by identifying and developing new programme approaches, methodologies and training methods for use by CATs, and by providing technical inputs upon request • Contribute to initiatives that are based on collaborative work to develop multi-disciplinary approaches to population and development and that contributes to national capacity building • Collaborate with CATs to develop or refine frameworks to operationalise ICPD perspectives • Create links with other United Nations agencies and international NGOs working in the field of population and development and reproductive health
Backstopping CATs through research and dissemination	• Collate and disseminate inter-regional experiences, lessons learned and best practices based on CAT reports, agency studies and academic publications, • Assist in developing inter-country research activities leading to innovative design and/or implementation methods in population programmes • Prepare guidance notes on emerging population issues, to keep the CATs up-to-date with the latest methodological and substantive issues of relevance for population and reproductive health programmes
Advocacy	• Promote the ICPD agenda within relevant divisions, units and constituents of agencies, and assisting them in the implementation of the plans of action of other major United Nations conferences, especially in population related areas

Table 3: Current (1999) and proposed (2000-2003) distribution of CAT specialists' posts by team

Country advisory team	Current distribution 1999		Proposed distribution 2000-2003		
	Total posts *	Countries covered	Total posts * Option 1	Total posts * Option 2	Countries covered
Addis Ababa	19	13	20	17	13
Dakar	21	17	22	19	17
Harare	20	15	21	17	15
Amman	19	44	17	14	23
Bangkok	13	11	13	10	11
Kathmandu	15	15	12	12	9
Suva	6	15	6	5	15
Mexico	17	41	17	14	41
Transition economies **	-	-	6	5	27
All teams	***130***	***171***	***134***	***113***	***171***

* Including one director per country advisory team.
** Location to be decided to cover the countries with economies in transition.

Table 4: Current (1999) and proposed (2000-2003) distribution of TAS specialists' posts by organization

United Nations organization	Current distribution 1999	Proposed distribution 2000-2003
	Total posts	Total posts
ECA	1	1
ESCAP	1	1
ESCWA	1	1
FAO	3	3
ILO	3	3
UN DESA	2	0
UNESCO	3	3
UNIFEM	1	1
WHO	9	4
UNAIDS	0	1
Total	***24***	***18***

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